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## Richmondville man speaks out for medical marijuana

ALBANY - New York could become the 13th state to say okay to marijuana for medical reasons.

Lawmakers are considering a bill that would allow people with certain debilitating diseases to smoke the drug.

### More Information:

► [Medical Marijuana ProCon.org](http://MedicalMarijuanaProCon.org)

#### Should medical marijuana be legalized in New York?

- Yes.
- No.

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Richard Williams of Schoharie County says it would mean he doesn't have to feel like a criminal for doing something that eases his pain better than anything else. He hopes New York lawmakers "stand up and have a backbone" and do what's right for people who are ill.

"It helps settle your stomach, helps with pain, muscle pain, joint pain," Williams explained.

He's been living with HIV for 20 years and has Hepatitis C. He's tried countless prescription pain medications and says marijuana works the best.

Friday Williams revealed his illegal drug use to police and people in his small Richmondville community.

"I don't want to feel like a criminal because I need to smoke marijuana because it's the only thing that makes me feel better," he insisted.

Williams spoke out to stand up for a law he believes in.

"Here I am in my community telling them I have HIV. Something I didn't want to do. But I'm standing up for rights of people who need to use marijuana. Not just me, but people with cancers, mental illness and other diseases," Williams said.

The New York State Assembly has said yes to allowing people with certain debilitating diseases to use medical marijuana. The Senate has until Monday to decide.

The debate is familiar to Vermont Medical Director Don Swartz.

"You don't want people who know that it helps them to have to break the law in order to get what they know they need," Swartz said.

The Green Mountain State's medical marijuana bill passed four years ago. Under the law, patients prove they have the debilitating illness with a doctor's note and register with the state's Department of Public Health. They can legally have two ounces of marijuana on them. That's equal to about nine plants.

A doctor can't prescribe the marijuana, but will help prove it's the best treatment when it is.

But Swartz says, on the other hand, you don't want drugs

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getting in the wrong hands. Of course that is one of the concerns with passing the law in New York.

A new report by a University at Albany researcher found teen marijuana use was down in states with medical marijuana laws.

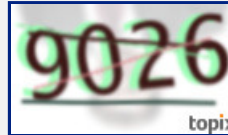


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